

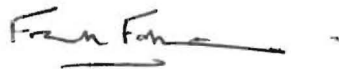
The House of Light in the Woods: a translation of a story for Jewish youth by Leo Hirsch

An Honors Thesis (GERMAN 363)

by

Anna Wurdeman

Thesis Advisor
Frank Felsenstein

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Frank Felsenstein", with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Ball State University
Muncie, IN

April 2014

Expected Date of Graduation
May 2014

SPColl
Undergrad
Thesis
LD
2489
.Z4
2014
.W87

Abstract

In American studies of the Holocaust, we may learn about anti-Semitic propaganda issued by the Nazis, or perhaps read an illustration of what Jewish life was like during this violent and oppressive regime. Less well known, however, are the efforts of some to combat anti-Semitic propaganda with literature that promoted Jewish culture and history during this time. *Das Lichterhaus im Walde* is one such example; it is a children's book written by Leo Hirsch for an audience with a reading level appropriate for late elementary students. It tells a story of two young children on a visit with family friends, who show them some traditional Jewish practices and teach them the Hanukkah story. This book, published in 1936, likely served as a resource for some Jewish children to better understand their culture and history, and to be aware of why they could be proud of it. My translation, entitled *The House of Light in the Woods*, serves to provide more information about lesser-known efforts to refute Nazi propaganda, and it is intended for continued use in Holocaust study.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Dr. Frank Felsenstein for presenting me with this opportunity, and for advising me throughout this project. His continued expertise, guidance, and encouragement were invaluable in completing this translation. I also thank Evelyn Jaffe for her extensive assistance in translating and editing this text.

I would like to thank Beth Moller-Tank, Karin Obermayr, and Dr. Lathrop Johnson for their skilled and patient instruction in the German language. I would also like to thank Dr. Ute Stargardt for teaching an enlightening course in Holocaust literature that fostered a desire in me to continue studying this tragic period in human history.

Introduction

One noteworthy aspect of the Holocaust was its frequently polarizing effect on people of the time: in some individuals, it drew forth the most horrendous aspects of human nature, but in others it brought out the best: compassion and tremendous bravery. Indeed, even small acts of defiance showed considerable courage during Hitler's regime. One such instance of bravery can be found in the creation of *Das Lichterhaus im Walde*, a children's book written by Leo Hirsch. This story promoted Jewish culture and customs at a time when German children, and all people, were being consistently presented with anti-Semitic propaganda.

Leo Hirsch was not primarily a children's author; he was a journalist and a teacher of Yiddish literature as well. He published many articles in *Der Morgen*, an intellectual periodical founded in 1925; he created an everyman's guide to Judaism called *Praktische Judentumskunde* (1935); he also wrote adult novels, including *Lampion* (1928) and *Vorbestraft* (1929), the former of which has themes similar to those of *Das Lichterhaus im Walde*, with more adult themes of sexuality and violence. The title character is a young Jewish man called "Lampion," a Jewish word for a lantern. In the beginning of the book, Hirsch defines a "Lampion" as someone who has seen war and trouble, but still burns brightly, like a lantern. Both *Lampion* and *Das Lichterhaus im Walde* provide messages of remaining strong in the midst of persecution. With these and his other publications, Hirsch made Jewish observance and cultural history his life's work, and he wrote *Das Lichterhaus im Walde* to make these lessons available to children. This book was quite the contrast to most children's literature available at the time. Hirsch was one of many Holocaust victims and died in a labor camp in 1943.

What sets Hirsch's book apart, of course, is its portrayal of Jewish religion and culture. A prominent Jewish author of the time, Else Ury, was well-known for her children's book series *Nesthäkchen*. The title heroine is the quintessential blonde German girl. Though Ury's family never attempted to hide their heritage, Judaism is never referred to in these books. On the contrary, *Nesthäkchen and the World War* in particular shows exaggerated patriotism and enthusiasm for military officials in World War I—the heroine, Annemarie Braun, starts a collection in which those around her must donate money to the war effort when they use words with non-German origins. Later in the book she torments a Polish girl in her class, making her a social pariah until Annemarie learns that this classmate's father died at the warfront. While the story is certainly not anti-Semitic, it also conforms to the nationalistic expectations that were typical of Germany before and during World War II. Ury's last book, *Youth to the Fore*, even portrayed Hitler's rise to power in a positive light, though it is unclear whether these naïve political views represented the author's true feelings—it is possible that she was hoping for a reprieve from the Nazi party later on, or that her publisher felt compelled to change the text.

Unfortunately, Ury received no special treatment; she was murdered in Auschwitz in 1943, the same year that Leo Hirsch died in a labor camp. The obvious danger of creating pro-Judaic literature makes Leo Hirsch's work all the more remarkable. The children in *Das Lichterhaus im Walde* learn of several instances in history when Jews faced persecution and were ultimately rewarded for their struggle. Since any openly negative commentary on Hitler's regime would have been undoubtedly fatal for Hirsch,

these stories of resistance provided a subtle encouragement to Jewish youth of the time. This translation of his work, intended for continued Holocaust studies, can hopefully expand and continue the influence of Hirsch's efforts.

The House of Light in the Woods

An explanation for Jewish youth

By Leo Hirsch

Chapter 1: Because it was Friday

“And the train went really fast, Mama, even though it wasn’t electric; up ahead there was a clattering locomotive with a chimney that looked like a funny top hat in a picture of your great-grandfather in that old album—but it smoked! The telegraph poles flew past, whoop—flew by, whoop, whoop, whoop—gone, and the wires climbed up and down, up and down, and the snow that lay there, it looked like thick white string—”

“And the bells, Mama, the bells on the poles,” said little Rosel, interrupting the story of her big brother Fritz (he was a whole year older), “they looked like pom-poms on the white string. I stood next to Fritz at the window there through the whole trip, where it said underneath: Don’t open Turks!”

“But Rosel!” said Fritz, and she and their mother marveled at what a clever rascal he was, “there were only a few letters that you didn’t see right; it said: Close the door! Don’t open before the train stops!”¹

“And one time,” explained Rosel again quickly, as her mother was becoming impatient, “one time the train screamed, the rails grated—”

“Ah, that was only because the brakes were on”, explained Fritz, “it went slower because we were arriving at the train station, and as we were exiting, I almost forgot our

¹ Rosel’s mistake can be accounted for by the similarity between the German words for “Turks”—“Türken” and “door”—“Tür”.

suitcases when Rosel didn't remind me, but only because the train station isn't bigger than ours here, perhaps a stop from the streetcar. Of course I couldn't believe that there is such a small train station. And Rosel thought, maybe it's only the children's train station, but there aren't children's train stations, are there, Mama?"

"Gotcha! I was playing a joke on you. Because at the barricade there were kids behind the official, who was not that big himself, he just had that giant walrus mustache so you don't think he's still a child too. And the others, they were the Ruben kids, who picked us up, Mama, all seven. And good thing that I had my Russian boots with me, because from the train station there was just snow, and we had to run a half hour through the woods to get to their house."

"Run? You rode! They had a little sled with them, and Ruth, Walter, Simon, Hannchen, Jakob—he stutters!—and Esther dragged it with a rope with jingle bells, and Rosel and little Joseph and our suitcases rode on the sled, and I dragged with them, though I shouldn't have. Have you ever ridden on a sled, Mama? And there is a mountain in the forest, that we sledded under, that was the best, one time we were all lying in the snow, and little Joseph cried, and Simon—he is the wildest of all of them—began to throw snowballs, you've never seen such a snowball fight, Mama!"

"But right away Ruth hit him in the face with snow, and we had to move on quickly, because it was Friday."

"Because it was Friday?"

"Yes, Mama, at first I didn't understand what they wanted with Friday either, so I asked, but they laughed at me, and at first Ruth just said: "Because the night comes so early now in winter." I thought, huh, they're afraid of the forest, but that wasn't it, and we

rushed on; right away little Joseph was calm again as the sled moved, and the bells on the rope jingled, but suddenly we were standing, we all stood like we were rooted there and the sled too, and little Joseph flailed his chubby little hands and called, “Eichen, Eichen!” So I thought, he sees an oak tree, but I didn’t see any, and Rosel thought, he wants to eat an egg, but no, he is only just three years old and can’t say all his words yet, especially not the long ones, and Jakob stuttered: “He means s—s—s—s—squirrels!”² and right there in front of us there were two lively squirrels climbing on the branch, with *such* long brown tails, over and over around the branch. Esther said they were playing hide and seek, because when one was on our side, then the other sashayed to the other side and peered around the corner so briskly and funnily with his little shiny eyes, like he wanted to say: Psst! Hey! Catch me! And then the other chased him, but the first was already around on the branch again and whistled—”

“No, it fumbled and chirruped and squealed, watch, Mama, like—ah, I can’t copy it anymore, but in the forest I still could, darn.”

“But Ruth said we had to go on, because it was Friday, and I didn’t want to ask again already what it was about Friday, because, you know, Mama, I’m a little bit shy. We let the squirrels play there and hurried away, only Rosel saw some a few more times, because she was sitting steady in the sled and didn’t have to watch the path like the rest of us did, but there was nothing else to see from the squirrels; and the suitcase fell in the snow, and we were already a ways away before Rosel noticed it—she was always peeking at the squirrels—so we had to go back, and Ruth said we had to hurry, because it was still Friday, even though it was still pretty light out, and Simon cried, “a deer, a

² The word “Eichen” means “oaks.” Rosel thought perhaps he meant “Ei”, for “egg”, but as Jakob tells us, he means “Eichhörnchen”, for squirrel.

deer!” but it was already making its escape from him, and then he smacked Walter, and he hit back, and I tripped over a tree root, and everybody laughed, and there was a grate that was full of snow, like powdered sugar icing, and behind it was a house with a quite small rooftop, such a slanted roof full of snow, that looked like—”

“Like the house of marzipan in Snow White!”

“Really, Mama, like from a fairy tale, and it was only us there. Frau Ruben, that’s the mother of the children, she stood in the door and laughed and called: “There you are!” And then there was coffee with bread, real homemade bread, Mama, and it tasted—!”

“And first she admired my Russian boots. She helped us take our things off, Mama, just like you. After the coffee we were allowed to see the house and the stables with both goats and the big cow and the little calf, that is already quite grown-up, and Esther said it was really small early in the year, as small as a big dog, at least that small, she said, and they had a dog too, a police dog, he’s named Prince, and I petted him and wasn’t afraid, Mommy, I really wasn’t. But Frau Ruben said we didn’t have time, because it was Friday, you know. Then we all washed up, that is, the boys had to wash themselves in a big wooden bathtub, one after another, and Frau Ruben took care of little Joseph with us girls, because he’s only three years old. The kids washed themselves first in the kitchen, they had to fetch the water themselves with a big bucket from the pump in the courtyard, but Mrs. Ruben always poured warm water on, and in the meantime we girls had to help lay out their clean laundry and the nice outfits, because she definitely couldn’t keep everything in order by herself. And finally we made a line, all fresh and like new from head to toe, and all nicely combed; you wouldn’t have recognized us, especially Simon, who is so wild, and Esther, she’s not wild, but so fidgety and squirmy.

And me either, then, because I only had my dark blue dress there with me, so Mrs. Ruben gave me a white one of Hannchen's that fit, even though Hannchen is a bit bigger than I am.³ And we were barely ready when in came a very hurried Herr Ruben, who had not even greeted us yet, and said a little quick hello and how are you, and then he was already outside again. Soon it started to get dark, and Fritz and I were very curious, because it had to come now, and it came, too, it came—"

"What came?"

"Now, you know already know what it was with Friday evening. That is, first Herr Ruben came again; he had on a nice black suit and a black hat, and got us all in the big sitting room. There was an enormous table decked out in white, and on it stood two tall, silver candlesticks between the place settings, but we couldn't see those well. The main thing was at the window: on the windowsill there was another candlestick, but it was noticeable because it was set up for eight candles and a small one before them, almost like a brass hand with eight fingers and a small thumb stretched out above—it was the Hanukkah menorah, we—I mean Fritz and I, we didn't know that yet."

"Well—", explained Fritz to his mother again, "well, we were all in the sitting room, only Frau Ruben and little Joseph weren't yet. But his father had hardly peeked—Herr Ruben, you know—when little Joseph comes tripping out of the kitchen and brings him a book of matches, and then meets the mother too in the sitting room; the father strikes a match and gives the book back to Joseph, who is so proud of that, but makes no sound, and we all stand there and don't budge, and now the father lights the small candle, at the "thumb" of the candlestick, not really, Mama, you understand already, he lifts out

³ White is traditionally worn on High Holy Days such as Yom Kippur and Rosh Hashanah.

the “thumb” of the candlestick and says, no, nearly sings with a pretty, solemn melody, like we had never heard before, two whole short prayers, I think, and then with the candle he has in his hand he lights one candle after the other, all seven small, thin, reddish-yellow wax candles. Afterwards he said (and the children, except for little Joseph and me, because we couldn’t say it with them yet) a somewhat longer Hebrew prayer. Then—then we all came, a bit self-consciously, around the window. Jakob wanted to begin singing a Jewish song right away, because when he sings he doesn’t stutter, but the father said to him softly, “Not now!” and the mother took the matches out of little Joseph’s hand, lit both big white candles in the silver candlesticks on the white-clothed table, put both hands spread out in front of her, as if she didn’t want to see the light—we all stood still as a mouse at the window and at the door, as if we were allowed a highest secret and therefore were on our tiptoes—finally she took her hands away from the light and said (she didn’t sing, she nearly whispered) another short prayer, and at one point it was so light and so solemn and so beautiful in the room, Mama, like I had never yet experienced, and Hannchen said quite quietly to Rosel: “Now it is the Sabbath in this house.” It was really so serious that we didn’t trust ourselves to ask what it meant. You can imagine that I was more than a little surprised, as we left the house again, only us kids and the father, and Rosel looked after us, quite perplexed too. “Where to?” I asked, frightened, as we came through the gate. “To the synagogue,” answered Jakob, and stuttered no more...

Chapter 2: A Telegram, a Telegram!

This Friday evening, even as Fritz and Rosel have already begun explaining to their mother, we want to take a peek once at another page. You will already have noticed

that both of these little guests from the big city who, on Friday afternoon, rather late afternoon, were snowed in at the Ruben family's house in the woods, knew no real answer to what actually happened. Naturally, it rang something of a bell to them that we Jews—and they themselves were also Jewish children—don't work on the Sabbath; rather, we should celebrate our hearts and God and ourselves to live in joyfulness, but as to how this actually went—this was quite hazy to them. They could no sooner imagine the village to which the Rubens' house belonged; from a car ride or from calling on the telephone, from the theater, the movies, or from the zoo, they could have explained the most noteworthy things, and Herr Ruben himself would have marveled at the building blocks of what all they knew; but village life was new to them, and to them the Sabbath was an unfamiliar wonder; and when Fritz heard the word “synagogue” from Jakob—who only stuttered on weekdays—he had considered all possible ideas, just not the idea that he had meant a house of prayer.⁴ But he knew that Fritz was a bit shy in the new environment (although all kinds of people from big city will claim the opposite) and that he was ashamed of his ignorance.

He came to an enormous respect for Herr Ruben. Herr Ruben still had not known him long, and when he himself a few hours earlier had gotten to know him, then the small, thin man with the little black beard seemed only more mysterious to him. Then, for a few hours, Herr Ruben appeared totally different. There this little beard was not so beautifully tailored, rather patchy and surrounded by bold black stubble; there he didn't have a smooth, dark hat decorating his head, but an old gray cap; and instead of the dark

⁴ The German word “Schule” means both “school” and “synagogue”. Since Fritz's family apparently does not frequently observe Holy Days, Fritz initially assumed that Jakob was referring to a school, rather than a synagogue, when he used the word “Schule”.

suit he had pants of a nondescript color; instead of the coat he wore a thick, old fur. On his back he had a sack full of dirty, tough, and untanned pelts of rabbits, hares, and a jumble of other animals. Herr Ruben had the occupation of pelt-trader—the little house in the woods, the goats, the cow, the little calves in the stable, the chickens in the courtyard, the little piece of garden, the acres of potato and rye downward from the lake—they could not feed him and his big family alone. Now there were people to whom the occupation with even skinned pelts didn't seem too appetizing, and perhaps Herr Ruben himself would have liked to look for a more agreeable job, if he had had the option and if his father and his father before him had not already bought the pelts from the farmers of the region in the wide surroundings, dried them, cleaned them, and had further provided them at a big factory with their meager profits, where the pelts then were tanned and finally manufactured into furs. Herr Ruben continued this well, so well that he, like all Jewish fathers, hoped that his children would at some point learn more and bring the business much further along than he had.

Now, when someone saw him walking through the forest to the village streets with his children and with Fritz, they must have gained real respect for him. Because he walked with his head held high, so light and so brisk, that were his wicked odors and haggling and his filthiness totally dismissed from him, he would have stepped up to the position of a king; he looked so calm, so composed and superior. The example of his father actually affected the wild Simon, who could almost never make his way anywhere without playing some trick. For Simon there was no branch too high, no hole too tight, no grave too broad and no other child too crafty; he pulled every cat's tail, caused every mutt to bark and every goose to cackle and clatter furiously, gladly shifted the horses'

blinkers to another part of the body where they had no eyes, put burs in the cows' tails and dressed an old, fat dachshund on his back legs with an old pair of little pants that belonged to his younger brother Joseph—yet even Simon himself walked straight along, threw not a single snowball and teased not even a single one of the sparrows that pecked at the edible scraps on the streets. So at first Fritz didn't even attempt to say or ask anything.

They had scarcely gone a few steps down the village streets along the first little houses, facing the rose bushes in the front gardens with snow-covered (and thus looking almost like headless snowmen) scarecrows standing safe against the frost, before a postman in uniform came biking towards them, climbed down from his bicycle, removed a yellowish envelope from his shiny red leather bag, and, his hand moving toward his cap, greeted Herr Ruben:

“Good evening, Herr Ruben. I have a telegram for you here.”

It was an unusual event, and it would become even more striking. It's not every day that one receives a telegram; even in the city it is not common, and certainly it is rare in the country. You can imagine the eyes of the children. And although it seemed to Fritz as though their father was startled by the word “telegram”, almost as though someone had pricked him, Herr Ruben said:

“Thank you. Kindly deliver it directly to my home.”

The postman seemed a bit perplexed by this. He probably thought, Herr Ruben must have misunderstood me, and so he said once more with great clarity:

“A telegram for you, Herr Ruben!”

“Yes, that's right,” answered Herr Ruben, “please bring it to my house.”

What was the postman to do? Shaking his head, he climbed onto his bicycle once more and rode up the street to the forest path, where he made a turn. Herr Ruben continued onward with his children and Fritz.

Now Fritz could wait no more. He was, after all, a city boy and so thought, perhaps the people here in the country have never in their lives received a telegram before, and as a result don't even know how important it can be.

"Herr Ruben," he said, grabbing his heart, "Herr Ruben—" he had to start over before he could speak up, but eventually it went: "But you know that was a telegram!"

"I know, son," answered Herr Ruben and looked at him kindly, "what do you mean?"

"It's probably very important, that's all I wanted to say, and terribly urgent—"

"Of course, Fritz. If it weren't so important, the people who sent it to me would not have paid the money to do so."

"But you didn't take it so seriously," said Fritz hesitantly, because he certainly didn't want to scold Herr Ruben, but he just could not understand him anymore.

"I take it very seriously; otherwise I would not let it come to my house."

Now Fritz thought that he understood, and he asked, proud that he had figured it out:

"So you already know who sent it and what it says?"

"No, absolutely not," Herr Ruben explained to him, and now Fritz had a real puzzle in front of him—"I don't have the faintest idea who sent me the telegram or what it is."

"But then why didn't you just open it here, right now?"

“Because today is the Sabbath.”

“But couldn’t there be important news inside?”

“Of course, son. But as soon as the Sabbath candles are lit, we no longer concern ourselves with business matters. And so, in the same way, we don’t want to talk about this any longer.”

“And if it’s not business news?”

“Then look. When—God forbid!—it is bad news, then at least we can enjoy the Sabbath in joy and peace before we have to have that on us. When, by the grace of God, it should be good news, then the joy will be no smaller when the Sabbath is over tomorrow evening. Do you understand what I mean?”

With that the issue was resolved—no one said more about the telegram, but Fritz could not keep it from his thoughts. When a telegram came to a house in the city, he thought, and for some reason you didn’t open it right away, you wouldn’t have a minute of peace, but rather guess and try to figure out who died or what terrible thing could have happened. There was only one thing he was beginning to understand: the Sabbath must have had an uncanny power, if they would stay so hidden from the outside world because of it. But before he could imagine that more closely and exactly, they had come to the little synagogue, and Herr Ruben greeted another man, who stomped on the snow with his shoes and wiped it in front of the entryway, while lots of light, entire billows of warmer air, and the first sounds of the beginning of divine service came outside through the door.

While the men in the synagogue carried out the evening prayer, the prayer leader went forward with the high chants and blessings, and the parish and the children’s

“Amen” rang out most lightly and loudly; the Hanukkah lights on the windowsill in the house in the woods slowly burned lower, and shone through the windowpanes into the dark expanse outside. The girls and little Joseph kneeled and huddled around their mother in the furnace corner, reading a book or just dreaming in the changing evening, and surely so quiet and cozy and homey that you could hear the cricket who stayed the winter behind the furnace, chirping his soft song. Meanwhile in the barn, after a work-filled day of grubbing in manure and pecking at seeds, the rooster, hens, and chicks clustered close together and the cow, while occasionally, as though unintentionally, hitting the calf with her tail, ruminated in the warm mist; while next door the goats already prepared for their nighttime rest, and, hastily using the bathroom, wished each other heartfelt, if not quite loud, but rather yawning mumbles of good night; while the cats in the kitchen sat under the window and acted as though they merely purred cozily in front of each other, but in reality blinked over at the stove with their narrowed gray-green eyes—that is, really at the large pot, in which their favorite food, a giant, full pickerel, that wafted through the Sabbath with all kinds of fragrant spiciness; while finally Prince, the dog, alertly struck out around the house, coming back to the gate from time to time and awaiting his master and little masters; while all of this took place in a certain solemn anticipation and preparation, night came with a huge, dark sack, cleared away the entire weekday (Friday) and winter-gray earth, and placed it in the sack. But right away there was a new, no less dark and difficult world in the place of the old one, only...this new world was a Sabbath world, that had a blinding magic curtain over it; that smelled hardly noticeably of good things; that rocked itself gently to the melody of an inaudible and yet omnipresent song; that was in all darkness so full of light; that the little village synagogue shone as if with a

spinning haze of light; and that most especially, as the door opened and the Jews of the village, no more than twenty in number, came out with the children and called to each other with joyful, excited, anticipatory and bright, lively mindsets:

“Good Sabbath! Good Sabbath!”

Chapter 3: Lights and Songs and Heroes

When the man of the house comes to prayers on Friday, then an angel comes to his right and an angel to his left. Fritz of course couldn't see the angels, as after the divine service Herr Ruben quickly went with him and the children back onto the village streets, which were also not at all light like the streets in the city, but it didn't give him the creeps at all; on the contrary, he was rather in a mood such that he could carry out the hardest, most beautiful things; and he could hear quite well how Herr Ruben, the quiet, awe-inspiring, worthy Herr Ruben hummed an almost-happy melody to himself. And as the forest path approached, they could already see a light between the tree trunks from far away, so lightly and encouragingly the Hanukkah candles shone out in the winter night of the forest. And as they opened the gate, Prince already wagged at them there, and at the front door stood little Joseph who called to them cheering: “Good Sabbath!”, and as they came into the hall and the girls keenly helped them out of their coats with the same greeting, took their hats and gave each of them a little black cap, even Fritz, who placed it on his head a little confusedly and more than a little proudly; and no one paid mind to the telegram that laid on the table in the hall, so that even Fritz only squinted back and forth at it once. And the large sitting room was so cozily warm, and beamed of pure brightness, that the silver of the candelabrum and a big, old cup again reflected and shone anew. The

father went to the mother, who had a wonderful smile that clothed her better than the finest jewelry, as she sat by herself in the furnace corner, and greeted her. Then the seven children came to Herr Ruben, and one after another he laid both hands on their head and blessed them, and lastly he also called up the amazed, waiting, unfamiliar children Rosel and Fritz and blessed them too, as though they were his own children. At that they—and Fritz himself, who no longer cared to whine, not by a long shot, because he was a grown boy and the oldest in the house—felt such emotion that they nearly had to cry. The father, half singing, half speaking, gave the welcome song for the serving angel and the hymn of the precious woman, and joyfully, quietly, the children hummed along; only little Joseph, who could not yet pronounce any of the Hebrew words, was a little loud—but that didn't hurt anything. Then everyone, including the mother, standing by the window, sang loudly and jubilantly along with the Hanukkah song—both oldest girls and Walter, whose voice had already changed—even in falsetto.

For both guests a new and magnificent strange impression followed next, so that they came to no more wonder and surprise. Each had seated himself behind his stool at the big table decked in blossom-white; Herr Ruben poured wine into the silver cup until it was full to the brim with sparkling red, raised the cup and recited the Kiddush, the consecration blessing of the Sabbath. Then he sat and, sitting, drank from the wine, and passed the cup on, until everyone had drunk a sip, and it went fierily down their throats, and they felt wonderfully warm inside from it. And when little Joseph took the cup with both hands and drank the last drops—"What a boozer!" growled Simon—they all walked to a stool in the corner, on which stood a bowl with a glass, and next to those stood a pitcher with water, and after the father poured water from the glass over each of their

hands, the person in front would pass him the hand towel, and while drying each said a blessing over the washing. Now they had to sit in their seat and keep their mouths closed until the first bite. The father, before whose place on the table laid two challah loaves under a dark blue, silver-embroidered velvet cover, removed the cover, and as if he wanted to identify the cutting line beforehand, moved the bread knife over the challah loaves, loudly spoke the blessing of the bread, cut through a challah loaf and sliced a round off, which he lightly dipped in the salt cellar, and ate. After he had cut a piece for everyone, the smiling and nodding mother (who herself so expertly baked the light bread with the gleaming brown, crispy crust) passed it around the table, and everyone said the blessing and ate. And when it was Fritz's turn, Herr Ruben whispered the Hebrew words to him, and the boy—at first he turned quite red—bravely repeated them: Baruch ata adonai, elohenu melech haolam, homozi lechem min haarez!—and ate the entire piece with such fervor as though he had prayed himself hungry. “Do you know what you said, Fritz?” asked the father. And Ruth translated it for him: “Blessed are you, God, our God, king of the world, who brings up bread from the earth.”

“From the earth?” Rosel asked, “bread from the earth?” That seemed a little unlikely to her. At this point you were not allowed to speak until you had said the blessing yourself and tasted your piece of bread, and Rosel had not yet done that. Everyone was rightfully bewildered at that, so that Rosel herself was quite embarrassed, until the father explained to her offhandedly that bread comes from flour, flour comes from grain, and grain grows from the earth. When Rosel's turn came, she said the berakhah by herself, and when little Joseph finally received his small piece, she

whispered the words to him, because he always got just the beginning, and then you had to help him out a little, like a small toy train set that had to be pulled around.

Ruth and Hannchen went in the kitchen and carried out the pickerel—and how it all tasted! Then they brought the soup, then the meat, and then the father began to sing the Zemirot, the old, fervently bright Sabbath song, and the entire chorus of children sang along, especially joyous at the refrain; kept the rhythm; and finally it was time for the Benschen, the table prayer, that the father recited loudly and clearly while the children prayed along and, after every blessing, chimed in with a loud “Amen”. And then everyone was quite cheerful; the mother’s cheeks had even turned red, and the children were glowing too; jokes, harmless teasing went back and forth, it was a funny exchange, and only when Fritz said that the menorah had gone out long ago was there a moment of quiet in the room, and everyone noticed that Rosel and Fritz could not really explain it all correctly. Questions, so many questions were on their lips, but they didn’t know which they should ask first. Then the father began to tell the Hanukkah story.

“Hanukkah is a joyful celebration,” he said, “but the Hanukkah story is not so happy, but wild and great, and the ending is happy. It was more than two thousand years ago, and it almost begins like a fairy tale: there was a king...

But you can’t imagine what kind of a king this was, this Antiochus Epiphanes. He ruled over Syria, and Palestine, the land of our father, also belonged to his empire, which was a remainder of the divided Greek empire of Alexander the Great; but that wasn’t enough for him; he wanted more land, he wanted to capture Egypt. He beat the king of Egypt in the escape, won some battles and moved victoriously further, until he had targeted a great power. This power, the world power of the time, was, yes, just like you

learned in school: ancient Rome. A Roman senator fell against King Antiochus Epiphanes, took his staff, moved it around King Antiochus in a circle in the sand, and said: “Before you come out of this circle, you will have given up all of Egypt and must swear to return immediately—or there will be war with Rome!” After that the king could not get out of it, and gnashing, he agreed.

Now Antiochus was after all an extraordinary person. He was certainly turning out to be some king, but then again he wanted to be beloved by the lower folk, and so he liked to appear suddenly when young people caroused somewhere, and wanted to sing and drink with them. But to make the fun really great, he liked to bring along his kingly bandwagon, and the young people, anticipating nothing good from that, stood up and ran off. Or he clothed himself like a totally normal citizen and went into the public bathhouse, but at the same time he also brought his expensive ointments, and the other people, with whom he had wanted to speak as peers, already knew who he was, took him for crazy, and avoided him. The more he pushed himself upon them, the more they distanced themselves from him. He had the ambition to flaunt more power than he possessed, and more than anything it agonized him that he had to give up Egypt merely because a Roman wanted it.

On his retreating march he came through Palestine. There it already looked no longer beautiful, because for the sake of the regime many Jews had started to forego Judaism and even to keep his Greek customs. We don’t want to separate from our environment, they said, since it’s only because we are always separated that we are oppressed. And so they no longer kept themselves to Judaism, were rebels and asked the regime to be allowed to live as Greeks. Not nearly all Jews thought this way; in contrast,

most of them stayed true to their beliefs and the life of the Father; the regime was a thorn in their eyes. As Antiochus Epiphanes and his armies came out of Egypt, which he had captured but was not allowed to keep—here his anger was unbounded, and on whom should he take it out if not on the Jews, through whose land he moved? He came to Jerusalem, entered the holy temple, robbed the golden sacrificial altar, the menorah and the instruments, all gold, yes, peeled the gold off the walls himself, took all the silver and hidden treasures and even the drapes with him. Meanwhile, his troops in the country acted no better; they murdered, robbed, and plundered, such that it could hardly stand, and grief, sorrow, misery, and shame came over all of Israel.

They lived that way for two years, but it was no life. Then things got even worse. Antiochus sent one of his high officers with a mighty army; he came and said that he brought peace. But they wanted to make the Jews harmless. Then suddenly they infested the city, acted more spitefully than Antiochus before, murdered and robbed, built a fortress in the middle of David Square, so that they could lay powerful and certain over Jerusalem and lurk like a cat over a mouse. At this the loyal Jews fled from their city. The worst part was the decree that Antiochus released. He forbade the bearing of Jewish beliefs and imposed the death penalty on everyone who did not abandon the beliefs of the Father. He commanded all to serve the Greek gods and to sacrifice our invisible God, and those who refused would be put to death. In even the smallest cities there was a supervisor of the regime who kept watch over the following of the kingly commands, and overall there were scarcely any Jews who would rebel in this disaster. But there were also people who would rather die than comply.

But there were not enough, so the temple was polluted and made into a temple of idols; not enough, so the enemies wallowed and feasted in the Jewish sanctuary; not enough, so there were neither Sabbath days nor festival days in the country anymore—they also forced the Jews to take part in all this godlessness and idol worship. There was, for example, an old and learned man named Eleasar whom they forced to eat pork; but he would not eat. They disabled him and did harm to his mouth, but he would not eat. They tortured him, but he would not eat. At this they had sympathy for him, or they acted that way, and they wanted at the least for it to appear as if he had surrendered; they promised to give him meat that he could eat, and he should only act as if he had eaten pork, for the sake of the king and for the sake of his own life—but he would not eat. He said drily: “My whole life long I have been a faithful Jew; now I have become ice-gray, still sent under the ground into my grave. What would the young people think if I, with my ninety years, suddenly began to pretend? To me that would be an eternal shame. What do I gain if I escape the sentence of the people? I can never escape God. Now then, I at least want to die happily, in a way befitting an old man, and to lead the youth with a good example.” So said the ninety-year-old Eleasar. They broke him with torment and tortured him to death.

Just so, they took a mother with her seven sons into custody, because she refused to eat the forbidden meat. When they wanted to examine them, the oldest said: “What do you ask? We would rather die than violate God’s commandments!” King Antiochus, who initiated the examination, was irate and let the oldest be tortured to death, and the mother and brothers had to watch as he was mutilated and then burned. The second brother they first scalped and then asked whether he wanted to eat pork. But he said only: “No, I don’t

want to!” and they martyred him more than before; but still in death he called to the king: “You crazy man! You can take this whole life from me, but God will raise us to eternal life!” The third brother came next, and showed himself to be so serene during the torture that the king could not contain himself. “What of these limbs?” called the third. “God has given them to me, and for his laws I will gladly relinquish them!” And he died heroically like his brothers, like the fourth and the fifth, who called to the king in their death: “You are human and have to die. And because you have might on the earth, you can do what you want. But you should not believe that God has left us. Wait a little while and you will experience how mighty God is!” And the sixth said: “We have fully deserved to die like this; we ourselves have sinned against God. You, however, King Antiochus, who rages against God—for you it will not happen in this way!”

This all happened in one day, and the mother stood nearby, as they took her sons, one after another, martyred them and tortured them to death, and she endured this terrible sight with untold patience and faith in God. Yes, she comforted her dying children and encouraged them and gave them words of courage. She clasped her heart and said: “I am your mother and have borne you. But your breath and your life I have not given to you, though I made your limbs. He who made the whole world and all life, he will also give you life again, since you now suffer and sacrifice for his law.”

King Antiochus did not really understand what she said. And there in his delusion and great zeal he was suspicious and feared each and every one of them; it affected him such that he thought the mother wanted to insult him, and he had her seventh son brought before her. The king overcame him and for good attempted once more, since he was the youngest son and the last to live, to use friendly words to reason with him: “I swear with

a kingly oath,” he said, “if you withdraw from Jewish law, I will grant you riches and see to it myself that you will be a great lord.” Now you should know that this seventh son was still a boy, and just as the king wanted to tempt him with such prospects, so had several others certainly discussed this with him. But the boy did not allow himself to become small. At this the king had the mother brought in and begged her to talk the boy out of his stubbornness if she didn’t want to lose him too, and she thought, yes, she would set his head straight. In reality this was only mockery from her; she took the boy aside and said: “My dear child, for nine months I carried you under my heart; for three years you drank from my breast, and with great trouble I nurtured you; now take pity with me. See the sky above you and the ground below you and the whole world—all of that God made from nothing. That is how we people too came to be. So you need not have fear before this executioner, but rather die gladly, my child, as your brothers did, and with that God will make you and them live again, and give you back to me.”

At this the boy ran back and called: “What are you waiting for then? Just don’t think that I will obey the tyrant! I will keep the law that our fathers have given us from God. But you, King, you who have brought so much sorrow to the Jews, you will not escape God’s judgment! God wills to punish us for our evils, that is true, but for me and my brothers will God’s anger come to you!” As the king heard this he became wild and mad with anger and had the boy gruesomely martyred like his brothers, and finally put the mother to death as well.

Now you have an approximate idea of how things went in Palestine at that time and what our ancestors had to withstand if they wanted to stay faithful to the old law. Now there were also men of the Jews who did not merely show courage in suffering.

There was a priest Mattitjahu in the little city of Modein, who had five sons: Jochanan, Schimeon, Jehuda, the one the Maccabee named Hammer called Eleasar, and Jonatan. Mattitjahu complained: “Why was I born, to see the destruction of my people and the holy city, and to sit here quietly alongside such disgrace!”

Chapter Four: The People Stand Up

The representatives of the king came in the city Modein to force the Jews into decline. Immediately several Jews betrayed the beliefs of their father. But the people of Antiochus turned to Mattitjahu and said: “You are the head of this city and have a great following and influence here. Therefore if you step before the altar of our gods and follow the order of the king, then everyone here will follow after you, and you and your sons will take the level of friends of the king and will receive gold, silver, and gifts of honor.”

Mattitjahu responded to this offer in a firm voice: “And even if everyone in the empire obeys the king and departs from divine service of our father—I, and my sons and my brothers, never will!” But he had scarcely finished speaking when everyone’s eyes went to a man, a Jew, who came to the altar and sacrificed to the idol. Mattitjahu saw this, and it reached his heart and shook his core, and he allowed his anger, righteous as it was, to run free; he jumped forward, slayed the Jew who sacrificed, and the messenger of Antiochus who had coerced him, and cut the altar into pieces. And then he cried in a mighty voice through the entire city: “Every man who is for our laws and still shines for our covenant, follow me!” His sons and many others followed him out of the city into the mountains. And many who sought righteousness and justice followed after him with wife

and child and livestock and possessions, because under the rule of Antiochus there was no life for them.

He collected a number of these refugees. Antiochus was notified that they had concealed themselves in the hiding spots of the wastelands and in the caves of the mountains, and he sent army against them. This army made their camp straight across and prepared to battle at the next Sabbath. And on the Sabbath they yelled across: "Enough now! Come out and bend to the will of the king. Then you should be granted life!"

But the Jews cried back: "We will not come! We will not bend. We will not desecrate the Sabbath!" At this the soldiers attacked lightning-fast and stormed the rock. And none of the Jews defended themselves, none lifted a hand, none even threw a stone, because they did not want to desecrate the Sabbath: "We will gladly die in our innocence," they said. "Heaven and Earth are our witnesses, that you murder us in righteousness!" And it accrued a thousand men.

When Mattitjahu and those around him, who had hidden in different spots, heard this, they despaired almost into grief. If we all behave this way, they said, and do not fight for our lives, then we will soon be wiped out. No, if we are attacked on the Sabbath, then we will defend ourselves and take on the battle!

And more and more pious and brave Jews were hurled to them. Those who could escape Antiochus's reign of terror joined Mattitjahu's colony, and a violent uprising erupted in the country. Where they came across their enemies, there they fought them and ran into the country. Mattitjahu and his sons wandered with their little patrol, appeared unexpectedly as though from the ground, scrambled the altars below and ensured, with force when necessary, the recovery of the Jewish divine service.

This continued, blow-by-blow, and old Mattitjahu could no longer live to see the end of the war of liberation. When he felt that he must die, he called his sons together and admonished them to stay united and always to begin their lives anew for Judaism: “Stay manly and strong in the Torah, my children! Through it you will become great and glorious! There, your brother Schimeon is a clever advisor; listen to him, and he shall be a father to you! And Jehuda, the Maccabee, is a hero of youth, and he shall be the leader of armies and lead you in battle! Collect everyone who keeps our laws! Avenge what has been done to your people! Punish, punish the heathens! Stay strong in our law!” Then he blessed all five of them and died, and they buried him in Modein in his father’s burial vault, and all the people gave solemn dirges for him.

The struggle went further, first only as a war of small Jewish troops, that already dealt with the Syrian occupation entirely. Something must happen, King Antiochus said to himself, and let one of his generals go forth against the Jews with a strong army. The leader of the Jewish insurgents was now Jehuda, the hammerer, who was brave like a lion, a commander and soldier such that no one could wish for better. He had hardly found out that an army of the king was advancing, when he was in a position with his people to surprise the enemies with an attack, and the opposing general and many of his soldiers stayed on the battlefield; the rest fled the country, and their weapons, cannons, and instruments were Jehuda’s spoils.

It was a difficult battle for the king, and his General Field Marshall Seron, who had the ambition to squash the uprising and make a big name for himself that way, now moved with a new, vast army toward Palestine.

Jehuda's men spotted this new army by Bet Horon and were nearly despondent. We are so small, they said, how can we fight against this mighty army? And fight them yet today, when we are already so worn down? Particularly, they had not eaten that day, but regardless, it was a hopeless struggle, as they were so small and against a superiority of trained professional soldiers! Yet Jehuda fired up his soldiers, reminding them that the victory was not up to numerical advantage; the power of victory comes not from number, but from God. "Overconfidently and vilely they come toward us, murder our wives and children, and plunder; in this way they bring war, but we fight for our lives and for our Torah!" So said Jehuda, and he allowed no further discussion, but drew his sword and plunged himself, all assailing, into the middle of their enemies, and his followers stormed in after him. And this time too he won the victory, and Seron was crushed with his army. A fear of Jehuda was raised there, and the terror that he inspired in all of his enemies made his name renowned.

Now King Antiochus, erupting in anger, backed up to a great blow. He sent out official messengers to all of the provinces in his regime, from the Euphrates to Egypt, and collected all of his soldiers. He opened all of his treasure chambers and gave them wages for the entire year. He saw, however, that his money was no longer enough, because the war against the Jews had devoured his funds, and the attempt to convert the Jews had also cost a lot of money, and the fancy indulgences with which he had tried to impress others were especially costly. So he took himself to Persia to collect tax money there, and sent an army, a forty thousand man infantry and a seven thousand man cavalry under three generals, to Palestine; they opened their stores at Emmaus and were quite skimpy with their funds there, and allowed the general slave traders to come so that they could receive

money from them for the Jews that they would like to take prisoner. Jehuda and his brothers were now in a more difficult position than before. The Jewish people were hopeless from distress, Jerusalem empty as a wasteland, and in the fortress the enemy occupation remained. In Mizpa, across from Jerusalem, Jehuda kept one last army watch. On this day the faithful fasted; they sent in the horns and cried to God, and then nominated Jehuda to be captain of his armament and leader of every ten, every fifty, every hundred, every thousand men. Those who had built a house shortly before, who were married, who had planted a vineyard, and who had no courage, these all he sent home. Those remaining broke out and camped out south of Emmaus, while Jehuda engrained in them for the last time to remain true to God, to keep themselves brave, and to rather fall in battle than to witness disaster and shame come to the people and to their sanctity.

In the night he chose one of the generals, Gorgias, from the best Syrian troops, five thousand-man infantry and one thousand riders, in order to attack and to kill the little Jewish armament in camp under the favor of darkness, before they could collect their wits. Jehuda, however, had a good scout; he heard word and set off with his troops, also in the darkness, from Emmaus to the main body of the enemies encamped there. Now when Gorgias came to Jehuda's camp, he found no one there anymore. So, he thought, Jehada got word and fled into the mountains? But he shall not escape me! And so Gorgias took his men and went into the mountains.

When day came, Jehuda stood with three thousand men in the plain before Emmaus and looked upon the war camp of the enemy's main body that was shielded with horsemen all around, and that was powerful and fully prepared. They themselves,

however, did not have swords and shields this time as they had wished. “Let us not be afraid that their numbers are great!” said Jehuda, starting a short speech for his three thousand, “not anxious before the force of their forward line! Think of how our forefathers were rescued at the Red Sea when Pharaoh pursued them. So let us too cry to heaven today, that our God does not forsake us!” And with that he began the charge. In the meantime the enemy had spotted them, arrived at the camp and placed themselves in columns for the battle. Jehuda’s trumpeters sounded the horns. The armies struck at each other. The Jews fought like lions. So sure, so incredibly brave, so death-defying and so inexorably they pushed forward, as though they followed a hundred thousand. The first enemies had already turned around to escape. And their escape was soon hopeless and universal, and those who did not seek distance from the mercenaries fell to the sword, and at a great distance the Jews, swarming, followed those who remained.

At this Jehuda could command “halt” and summon his people anew. “Now they will follow no further,” he called to them. “Our work is not yet done; there is still war against us. Gorgias sought us still in the mountains, we wanted to surrender and then, then our prayers were answered!” Jehuda had not yet spoken these last words, when a vanguard of Gorgias came through a narrow passage and saw what had taken place in the plain: their own had fled, and the Syrian camp burned before Emmaus! When Gorgias’s people discovered this they began to shake in fear, and when they saw Jehuda’s army ready to receive them, Gorgias’s mercenaries too would stay no more and fled as fast as they could. Now the Jews plundered the camp and captured great treasures. On the march back they sang God a song of thanks and praise, because divine help was awarded to Israel on this day.

Those who had escaped came and reported to their warlord what was coming, and their leader was shocked and frantic, because it was not as he had wanted it, and not as King Antiochus had ordered it.

Chapter Five: The Festival of Lights

Jehuda and his brothers said: “Now our enemies are destroyed. Let us come to Jerusalem and restore our sanctuary, and renew the consecration of the holy temple!” And the entire victorious army collected themselves and came to Jerusalem and through the mountains of Zion. There they found the sanctuary desolate, the doors burned down, the diastole overgrown with weeds, and the sacrificial altar unclean. At this they grieved deeply, threw themselves to the ground, blew in the horns and called to God. Now there was yet an enemy occupation in the town, and while a Jewish crew kept these last foes in check, Jehuda and another crew cleared the holy temple, brought new instruments inside and put everything in order as it was before, and as it was required. So they finished the entire job and stood there in the early morning on the 25th of Kislev and made a sacrifice according to Jewish law, again for the first time in the sanctuary. On the same 25th of Kislev, where three years prior Antiochus desecrated the temple and contaminated it with idol worship, they also celebrated the dedication of the temple with songs and with zithers, with harps and with cymbals. There the entire people fell face-down and prayed to heaven, to God, who had brought them rescue.

This observance is called “Hanukkah”; they celebrated Hanukkah for eight days, and with joyful hearts they brought gifts and offerings for the rescue and as thanks. They decorated the front wall of the temple with golden crowns and shields, they restored it

from the doors to the innermost parts. And once and for all, Jehuda and his brothers sat with the community of Israel, secure that year after year, from the 25th of Kislev on, in peace and joyful activity, Hanukkah would be celebrated for eight days.

Since Jerusalem still belonged to King Antiochus, the eternal flame no longer burned in the temple. When Jehuda restored the temple and wanted to relight the extinguished eternal flame, there was only one small, sealed jar of oil on hand that the heathens had not contaminated. But a miracle occurred, and the tiny little jar lasted for eight days, and it was light in the temple. Since then we burn candles for eight days long in the memory of that miracle, one additional light each evening.

“So, children, that is the Hanukkah story,” said the father, and paused to breathe.

“And what happened after that?” asked Rosel.

“What happened after that? Yes, well, the Maccabee story—because Jehuda’s faithful were Maccabees, and all those who followed after were called Maccabees—does go further. The independence of the Jewish kingdom was established for centuries, but the war against the Jews was not yet over. Antiochus died full of despair over the defeat of his troops and full of contrition over everything that he had done to the Jews, and his son Antiochus Eupator followed him on the throne. A Syrian occupation remained at the fortress in Jerusalem. Jehuda laid siege upon the fortress; some from the siege escaped to King Eupator and convinced him to take up a new fight against Jehuda. The army that now moved closer amounted to a hundred thousand men on foot and twenty thousand on horse, and with that thirty-two well-trained Indian war elephants.

When they came into this country, Jehuda had to cut short his siege of the fortress and surrender. The king allowed his army to form battle order yet before daybreak and

give the trumpet signal. They held red wine and mulberry juice in front of the elephants' noses to get them wild and irritated. The division was such that for every elephant came a thousand men on foot in iron helmets and iron breastplates, and five hundred men on horses, and the elephants, on whose backs were giant wooden towers containing thirty-two catapults and spear-throwers, and on whose necks sat an Indian who served as chief of the living tanks, went first in the battle. The sun went on and shone on the golden and ore shields, that the mountains all around shone like fire, and gently, to half above in the mountains, and to the other half down in the flat land, the army came nearer, with unsettling racket and commotion.

Once again battle erupted, and the courage of the Jews brought them success; six hundred Syrians fell at the beginning. Now Eleasar, Jehuda's younger brother, spotted an elephant that was armored with kingly armor and hung over all the others. At this he thought, the king rides on this animal, and Eleasar wanted to sacrifice himself to save his people.

With great courage he rushed into the middle of the battle order, gave himself a bruise while he knocked down those who were in his way right and left, cut himself a bloody wound and threw himself under the giant body of the elephant. Then he pitched his sword and drilled it into the body from underneath the mighty animal. The elephant crashed into the ground and buried Eleasar underneath him.

But the Syrian army was still too powerful. It moved against Jerusalem like a waltz, and Jehuda could do nothing to evade it if he didn't want to unnecessarily give the life of his people to the game. The Syrians had to follow a fortress on the path because their food was running out, though the king had promised the Jews free escort and life in

the event of their surrender. Then the Syrians laid siege on the sanctuary on Zionsberg with fiery cannons and catapults and cannon towers. The Syrians could not aim much with all these weapons: the Jews understood this type of war technique also. But there was no more food in the stores, and hunger was as dangerous an enemy as the Syrian king. Now it wasn't going much better for the Syrian king, because his hoard was also quite small, and his men were growing weaker by the day; he was thereto informed that a rival had taken away his regime while he was here fighting with the Jews. What was he to do? He gave up the siege, offered the Jews peace, and promised them that they could live according to their own Jewish laws. That was an honorable peace, and the Jews accepted it.

Still, there was no peace in the country. The Syrians continually tested their luck against Jehuda anew, and if the outside enemies yielded, then enemies from inside, rebel Jews, created no smaller difficulties. A new commander led the Syrian troops and did not allow himself to be deterred by any nervousness that Jehuda had procured for him, until finally, in a large decisive battle, his army was wiped out to the very last man, and he himself would run off with head and hand.

Jehuda's glory grew ever greater, and it showed him that he was not merely a brave commander and soldier, but rather an even greater statesman. He sent a message to Rome, and the Roman senate, the great world power of the time, arranged an offensive and defensive alliance with the Jews.

But before the alliance could bear its first fruits, another fight with the Syrians came anew, and this time the Jews stood against an advantage that was greater than sevenfold. When Jehuda's men saw this, many became afraid and ran away. Only eight

hundred men stayed with him—against 22,000 Syrians!—and the battle stood before them. His heart tore him up; he had no more time to collect his people. He despaired. But he did not let it show and called to his faithful: “Look! We want to assail the enemy! Maybe we will clobber them!” But the eight hundred thought: “We can’t do that! We can’t manage it! Today we would rather yield; maybe when we’ll have another chance, when there are more of us and we have better prospects!” Jehuda called: “Never! It will never happen, that we run away like cowards! If our time has come, then we want to bravely and heroically die for our brothers! There can be no blemish on our honor!”

Jehuda’s men started off against the enemies, whose catapulters, archers, and horsemen moved onward. The men on foot veered toward Jehuda on both sides. Horns sounded from both fronts. The earth shook from the screams of the armies, and the battle was given up from morning to evening. Jehuda saw that the leader of the enemies stood with the crack troops on the right wing; he collected hurriedly his most spirited warriors around him, stormed forward, and destroyed the right wing. The crack troops turned around and fled. Jehuda came after. But the left wing of the Syrians was slued and turned around in surprise. Now Jehuda attacked from the back. He turned his little troops around, and with irrepressible anger and terrible casualties, they fought on.

Jehuda fell in this battle. How he fell, well, that is no longer passed down for us. We only know that the others fled. Jonatan and Schimeon bore their fallen brother away. They brought him to Modein and buried him in the family tomb. All of Israel mourned him and gave solemn dirges: Oh, that the mighty have fallen, Israel’s hero!

After Jehuda’s death, all sorts of traitors came out of hiding once again, and a famine broke out; it was loyalty broken as everyone has experienced, even the earth. The

Syrians came with might, traced Jehuda's followers and friends, and put some of them to death under derision and ridicule. But the faithful again came together and said to Jonatan: "Since your brother died, we have no one to equal him as a fighter of our enemies. So today we elected you. Be our leader and commander in our war."

And the fight went further. Jochanan, the oldest of Mattitjahu's sons, fell, and Schimeon and Jonatan avenged his death. There were skirmishes and murders, and Jonatan endured them and conquered. And later, when throne disputes developed in Syria, he turned out to be an able statesman and secured the freedom of the Jewish people through admirable treaties, until a follower of Antiochus succeeded in capturing and murdering him through insidiousness and false promises. Schimeon followed him, the last survivor of the brothers, and although he too was murdered from behind following a successful period of rule, he was the first to rescue his people for centuries and the first to see them freed.

Chapter Six: Nightly Adventure

If you had asked Rosel how the Friday when she heard the Hanukkah story ended, then she would hardly be able to come up with a satisfactory answer. She only knew that she slept in one of the upper rooms with the other girls. They moved around in the dark and scampered into the beds, and as Rosel was very tired, she fell asleep immediately. In her dream the story that had been explained to her played, but as seems to happen in dreams, the narration was a little bit muddled. Really, thought Rosel, it was sort of a creepy story, with so much war and battle, weapons and blood, with loud men and only one single woman, the mother of the seven sons. If Rosel had seven sons, she thought,

and the king with the strange name Antiochus Epiphanes came and demanded that her sons eat pork...well, what would she do then? Let all of them die, even the little boy? And only because of...pork? But no, it was not merely because of pork, it was about everything, about God...what kind of king could she imagine, that because of a few idols from stone or whatever they might be made of, made so many Jews battle and his own soldiers show up over and over again, fighting, and dying...really, it was not to be understood. But he was sort of crazy, this king, An—ti—o—chus—E—pi—pha—nes, that was what he was called, and with such a person only heroes could be ready. Rosel herself, if she had lived back then, would have liked to be a heroine, that was very clear to her before she closed her eyes and fell asleep.

Then she actually dreamed that she was the mother of the seven sons. But of course this scene played in her parents' apartment. It rang, yes, it rang three times one after another, and she didn't exactly know in her dream whether someone wanted to demolish the bell or whether perhaps it was the bombs. What is going on? she thought anxiously, who is there? And with these words she went through the corridor and opened the door. There stood before her a giant man with angry eyes and with two sharp wrinkles in his forehead. On his head he had a golden crown that sat somewhat askew on him and did not suit him well. Aha, thought Rosel, this is the king Antiochus E—pi—pha—nes. Behind him stood, filling the entire staircase and the first floor, terrifying men with old-fashioned lances and shields and making the new red Venetian carpet dirty with their giant feet. If only the concierge knew! Now Rosel clutched her heart, because one must surely behave as though one is not afraid, and said: "May I help you?"

“Are you the mother of the seven sons?” asked the king. He had a voice that was rough like a grater.

“Thanks be to God, that I am!” answered Rosel.

“Then tell your seven sons that they should to come down here and sacrifice! Or else—“

“Excuse me?” asked Rosel, “what should my seven sons do?”

And behind the king, who looked so terrifying, stood a man, probably a general, who did not think it was entirely so grim. He now wanted to explain to Rosel why her seven sons should come down, and said to her: “Down here we have a pig. And idols. And if your noble sons come down and become traitors, then they will get money, and so will you, good lady!”

But Rosel would not allow herself to be outwitted in the dream. “Idols?” she asked, repeating his words. “And—a what? A—pig?”

The king acted as though he had no time to talk much with her. He was already angry that it had lasted so long, and yelled at her: “If your seven sons do not obey, then I will have their heads chopped off! Or they will be hanged!”

In fear, because she knew already how the story goes on and how her seven sons were tortured one after the other and how at the end she herself was also put to death, in fear Rosel was so apprehensive, as if an entire truck full of iron lay on her breast. The impression felt so real, and she groaned from the deepest part of her soul so that Ruth, who slept in the bed next to her, rolled over and, half awake, wanted to see her. But while she thought this, Rosel’s dream went on, and the king, this villain, grew more impatient and looked still much bigger and more terrible. You could get the creeps from how he

peered at her, and the crown slipped deeper in his dark face. But Rosel was no prissy little girl; she breathed deeply and said with a strong voice: "Sir King, my seven sons are no traitors, as you may think."

"Then I will get even with them!" cried the king.

"Sir King!" said Rosel now and did not let herself be intimidated by his cry, "then you can take me and let me die. But leave my seven sons in peace!"

She had scarcely said this, when it was easier than she thought; she had rescued her seven sons. But in the same moment the king drew his sword over her, that it flashed greater light and gleamed eerily imminently above her, she cried out and—awoke. There was no king at her arm, but Ruth instead, who had woken her.

What does Fritz dream about? she wondered. He was not dreaming yet, because after everything that he had experienced that day, he could not fall asleep so quickly. Besides that, it was cold in the room where the boys slept, it was not entirely dark, and the snow lay finger-thick on the trees whose branches shone through the window. Underneath, in the hallway, the telegram still sat there. Or should Herr Ruben have opened it and read it? No, impossible! What could it be in that telegram? thought Fritz. He thought about this for a little longer, and after a while he could no longer control himself. He pulled on the cover of the bed that stood next to his and whispered: "Hey, Walter!"

Walter turned over and asked: "What is it?"

"Walter, are you sleeping?"

"No. Why?"

"I want to ask you something"

“What?”

“What do you think it could be in the telegram?”

“No idea.”

“Are you not curious?”

“No, not today.”

“Why not?”

“Because it’s the Sabbath.”

From the whispers Simon was also awoken from his half-sleep, and became attentive. He crawled quietly out of his bed that stood behind in the back corner, and while Walter turned himself over again in order to sleep, he crept up to Fritz and asked him quietly about what he had heard: “Why do you want to know that?”

“Oh, only because it’s a telegram. And maybe it’s important. You really have to open it and read it.”

“But you can’t do that today.”

“What if I did it?”

“Oh, are you allowed to do that?”

“No one’s every forbidden me from it. For us—“

“Do we both want to go down?”

“Attaboy.”

“But we have to be quiet. Otherwise it will be bad for us.”

On their tiptoes and in shirts, although it was cold enough, they crept to the door—they made sure that it didn’t creak for Simon’s sake—that he then leaned on.

Level by level they climbed down the narrow steps and were now in the hallway, where it was pitch-black.

“Now you have to move a little to the right, there, Fritz, along the right wall, but quietly, so that we don’t wake anybody—“

“Hey, Simon, I think there’s somebody—an animal—“

“Oh, don’t worry, that’s Prince. Now take a step to the left, now I’ll bend down, but go when you can, and now take the telegram!”

Fritz bent down, like he was told, and groped around with his hands for the telegram. It seemed that when Simon for a moment opened a window or a door widely and then closed it again, an icy gust of air made them shiver. At the same time Simon pushed something into his hand, and Fritz figured out—it was not a telegram, rather something eerily sharp and glowing. He thought his finger started to burn, and let go right away, and what Simon had pushed into his hand fell to the ground and shattered with a quiet, creaky noise. Fritz was frozen in terror. He didn’t try to calm himself down, he wanted to cry, and controlled himself only with the utmost effort. What Simon had given him instead of the telegram was an icicle or snow, and the most unpleasant part was that a splinter from it had fallen onto his bare foot. Fritz tried first to shake the cold thing from his foot, as Simon quietly chuckled into his ear and whispered: “Now we can go back up and read the telegram.”

Quite embarrassed, Fritz crept behind Simon back to the steps. He decided: I will never be curious again! He was so filled with shame and repentance that he was not angry with Simon for a second for playing this trick on him. But Simon himself was not entirely comfortable with the whole thing, and so he tripped on the lowest level of the stairs. He

crashed about rather loudly, and Prince, who was lying under the steps on his rug, began to growl fiercely.

At the same time a door opened underneath; it was the door of the parents' bedroom, and Herr Ruben called: "Hey, what's going on there?"

No answer. Fritz pushed himself behind Simon tight against the wall, so as not to be seen. But it was too dark anyway.

"Who pushed himself around on the stairs then?" asked Herr Ruben; he called for Prince, as if dealing with a burglar.

Now Simon showed himself to be a fine rascal, because he took it all alone. "Father," he called, "it's just me."

"Who? Simon?"

"Yes, I—"

"What were you doing in the middle of the night?"

It struck Fritz that Herr Ruben's voice sounded much friendlier now. After he had envisioned the worst, he now again had some hope that everything would turn out fine.

"Simon answered: "I—yes—I am here—just so—"

He stuttered, so as not to tell a lie, and his father thought it was best to not ask any further questions. He was probably cold too and was tired. At that he called: "Just so? Well, then you go 'just so' in your bed and sleep. And see to it that next time you don't trip on the steps."

The door closed. Simon went ahead upstairs; Fritz thanked him silently that the thing had gone leniently, and a minute later they had already begun to create a little chamber orchestra of snoring: Walter's snoring had the goal to make you notice that his

voice was changing, as it sometimes went femininely high and then sunk again to manly deep, so that he snored his way through the entire sheet of music, from boyhood to basso; Simon played, so to speak, the snoring saw, and one could become quite fearful that his snores would saw the bed into two parts; and Jakob snored quietly and in little installments, if one should not say, he stuttered every snore a few times before he brought it about. Or maybe they didn't snore, and Fritz was only dreaming? And didn't he snore along with them? Otherwise he never did that; at least he had never heard himself snore. But now he lay in a strange, unfamiliar bed, probably on the wrong side, and dreamed...

Chapter Seven: "I am a Jewish Boy!"

There are different kinds of dreams, not merely good and bad, beautiful and scary, but also those that you dream with open eyes; for example in school (where you should really not be dreaming) and those before and during falling asleep and those at the end, that you only dream in the deepest sleep. Fritz had just laid down, again calm in bed, when it started. The other boys snored, which was such a nice, sleepy music, and our Fritz, who blinked a little bit out the window, it seemed, as a squirrel bounded on the branch in front of it. From the branches a little brick of snow fell down, the squirrel sat himself so that small, shiny little eyes could peek into the bedroom, and laid his tail—what an elegant, large tail!—to fit, took a nut or acorn in his little front paws, gnawed on it for a while, turned the fruit with his paws quite quickly back and forth and in a circle; it had already gnawed through the skin, and now it said: "Fritz, Tiddelfitz, Fritz, Tiddelfitz, come along, come along!"

That can't be right, Fritz thought to himself, since when do squirrels talk? Either, he said to himself, that squirrel isn't a real animal or I'm already dreaming. But the little animal seemed to not have much time, because he already began again: "Fritz, Tiddelfitz, Fritz, Tiddelfitz, come along!"

At this Fritz thought: And if I'm dreaming, I want to follow the squirrel. Yes, but how? The bed has become halfway warm; you would like going straight out into the cold least of all. If the bed had wheels...and a little motor under the bolster...oh no, not wheels, rather blades for ice skating and underneath on the foot end a little towing bar and a long rope.

"Sure, as you wish, Fritz Tiddelfitz!" said the squirrel, and threw the rest of the acorn away. And at the same time the wall with the window in that room disappeared.

"Magic flash, Fritz Tiddelfitz!" called the squirrel; it made a cupped, stooped back, placed its tail stick-straight in the air, and right away the bed had blades on its stiff wooden legs; on the foot end there was a fine, long, red rope with jingle bells of pure silver; the squirrel took the rope by itself and pulled it on through the snowy night and moved the bed skates, as it was a wish.

"Faster, faster!" called little Fritz, and now the squirrel flew, and the bed with the blades flew behind him through the clouds, that crunched like fresh, strong snow, and the snoring of the boys was continually lighter and further away. It seems to be a dream, thought Fritz, shame that the others can't come along. But before he could deliberate any more, the squirrel stood remaining in the middle of a white, wide cloud and dusted the sweat off of his forehead with his large, red-brown tail. Fritz was disappointed and asked: "Squirrel, may I ask why we stopped skating?"

The squirrel turned around and said quite quaintly: “Stumps and points, flash of magic, where orders little Fritz?”⁵

“In the land of the Maccabees!” Fritz ordered, and then the trip went further over the moon, where his antique cap moved tight over his ears, and over the big bear that the squirrel had punched in the nose in the overhead flight; it was so funny. I don’t want to be dreaming, Fritz said to himself, this is like a fairy tale, and I would rather stay awake. In this moment he was strongly asleep and for a while knew nothing more. And when he again dreamed further, there was no squirrel to see anymore, and the bed no longer traveled on skates over the clouds, but little Fritz was in the land of the Maccabees.

Now you would probably like to know what it looked like there. Ah, really not beautiful. There was certainly no snow to see, but the mountains were bare, and turned from a mountain into a cave, so deep and so widely branched, that one would certainly get lost inside if one was not careful. Fritz was very careful. Even before he entered the cave, he looked around at all sides, where no scouts of King Antiochus Epiphanes could discover him, because otherwise all Jews in the cave would be lost. When he registered not a soul far and wide, he crept quite hurriedly into the cave. The entrance was narrow and nondescript, like a big flue opening. After that Fritz first had to crawl in on all fours. But already after some strides the cave widened, and soon Fritz found himself fitting better in half-darkness. He positioned himself and could now go further upright.

Suddenly a voice came from inside, a voice whose sound was thrown in multiple echoes from the walls of the cave: “Stop! Who goes there?”

“Good friend!” answered Fritz, “I am one, a Jew.”

⁵ The squirrel’s question, when posed in German, rhymes and almost sounds like a magic spell: “Stumpf und spitz, potz Zauberblitz, wohin befiehlt der kleine Fritz?”

“Anyone can say that,” answered the voice. It was deep and somewhat rough, especially in an echo.

“I will do everything that you ask!” called Fritz, joyfully and proudly. “I have come to help you!”

It was a while before an answer came, and Fritz could not go further in the meantime. He stood there impatiently. The people in the back of the cave seemed to be debating; at least, you heard a kind of murmur from the depths of the cave, which was now entirely dark. Finally he heard the rough bass voice again: “You are only a young boy, hardly twelve years old—we would rather send back again to your mama.”

“Oh, please,” called Fritz, “please, don’t send me back. I’m not so little. I can definitely do something.”

“What do you want to do then?”

“Everything that is necessary! Give me a sword to fight!”

“You could not carry it.”

“But I can throw rocks. I have the best aim in my entire class, and in gymnastics I rank “very good”, and I can scout too, and if there’s a different path to take—“

“Yes, a different path. Back to your mama!”

“Oh, please, please, don’t send me back, please, let me fight with you, and if it must be, I will gladly die, but don’t send me back, you will surely not regret it.”

“Well, good, because you begged so, come!”

“The man with the deep voice came for him, and wordlessly Fritz groped around after him. Now there came from the opposite side of the cave a shimmer of light, and Fritz saw many men with glittering weapons on the sides of the cave. Some sat; most

stood silently and enormous, like monuments, and hardly even looked around at each other. Instead of coming continually closer to the light, the man with the deep voice went left down a side path of the cave, and the end of which burned a glowing red gleam. And here too stood and sat armed Jews on the sides; it was an unsettling, underground army camp.

At one point Fritz stood before the red fire. That was at the end of the side path fueling from a stove-like pit, and a little old man who looked like an elf and jumped around, moved a heavy wooden billet around in the fire from time to time.

“Who do you have there?” called one of the men who sat around the campfire.

“He seems to have a titan captive!” spotted another.

“Perhaps it is the son of King Antiochus Epiphanes?” thought the elf quite seriously, but then he smirked, such that Fritz was nearly fearful.

“Who are you, my boy, and what brings you to us?” asked the first again, and stood up from his seat on the ground in order to view Fritz precisely. He had an attractive, thin, noble face with a high forehead and a black beard. That surely must be Jehuda Maccabee, thought Fritz, if he appears like this standing before you, and said:

“I am a Jewish boy and want to do everything for you that I can.”

“What is your name?”

“Fritz.”

“Good, Fritz, we want to try something with you.”

“Oh, sir,” the elf turned once more to the tall, noble man, “will the son of King Antiochus, then, have to sacrifice much in our poor cave from what he is used to in his father’s palace? Will he last then?”

“I am no son of the king. I am a Jewish boy!” called Fritz indignantly, and all of the men in the cave listened and looked him over.

“Perhaps he is only disguised as the son of the king?” began the elf once more. It was impossible to argue with him. First thing when I’m big and fully grown, thought Fritz, I will cut this elf such that he will forget his smirk.

“We will prove what is going on with Fritz,” said the first now in such a definite way that no more discussion could follow. “Fritz, do you trust yourself to undertake a dangerous task?”

“May I ask a question first?”

“Please, Fritz.”

“Are you Jehuda Maccabee?”

“They call me that.”

“Then you can give me any order. Then I will run, when it must be, to the end of the world and fight against the king—“

“Not so fast, my boy, always slow. Do you know Greek?”

“No, I am in my first quarter.”

“Then you must see how you will come through. Can you swim?”

“Oh yes, I am a death swimmer!”⁶

“What is that?”

“I passed a test on swimming for an hour.”

“Good, Fritz. Then go to Jerusalem, seek entry into the fortress, determine how many men are there in the occupation, and come straight back as quickly as possible.

⁶ The term “Totenschwimmer” or “death swimmer” was used because of the skull-and-crossbones symbol associated with the SS officials who administered the swimming test.

With that the talk was done; the elf took a deep bow before Fritz, his hands nearly grazing the floor, and Fritz went. The man with the deep voice, who had led him to the fire, now showed him the way out to the exit of the cave, surveyed for a while whether anything suspicious showed itself, and then Fritz was left by himself. What should he do? He stood, quite helpless, at the foot of the mountain. He turned around; perhaps he should go back and ask the man with the deep voice about the way to get there. But now he could no longer discover the entrance to the cave. He was indecisive and sad. But before he could really give in to his distress, his eyes caught on something brown; he went to it and was frightened because it jumped suddenly. It is the squirrel again, thought Fritz, and now he was no longer sad.

“Squirrel,” he called, “what should I do?”

But the squirrel had something more urgent to do than answer him, because it ran in great comical leaps away from him; it ran continually faster, and Fritz ran after it. It ran along a narrow path, and Fritz followed; it jumped over a thin brook that had run dry, and Fritz followed; it ran over a hill, and Fritz followed; but as he came over it, the squirrel disappeared.

Fritz was sad all over again and looked back; before him lay a beautiful big city. It was Jerusalem. Relieved, he breathed out. As soon as I see that squirrel, he promised himself, I will thank him and get him an entire mountain of acorns or nuts. He went through tight alleys and wide streets, and then he was in front of the thick walls of the fortress. Before the gate of the fortress stood a sentinel, armed from head to toe and before Fritz could identify it, the gate opened from inside, music sounded, and out rode on a huge elephant, on whose back a wooden house with grand screens and rugs shook

back and forth, King Antiochus Epiphanes, and he called: “Now we advance against Jehuda Maccabee! May he be on his guard!” And after the king came soldiers and soldiers on horses and on foot, then more elephants and again prancing horses and marching soldiers, an incalculably long procession.

At this Fritz thought to himself: I want to run fast to the cave and warn our people! And he ran there like never before.

When he finally made it into the cave and to the fire, the elf hissed at him: “Stop! They are having a war discussion that you may not interrupt!”

“But I have an urgent message to deliver!” whispered Fritz. His heart pounded like a drumbeat from exhilaration.

“This cannot be interrupted!” said the elf yet again and wanted to force Fritz away. Since Fritz would not yield, he held the telegram in front of his nose and said: “Look, you haven’t even opened this telegram yourself! And yet you want to interrupt them for this?”

“Is today the Sabbath then?” Fritz asked, amazed.

“Of course. You are a Jewish boy and don’t know that today is the Sabbath?”

“But this is war!”

This outcry caught Jehuda’s attention, and he looked with frowning brows upon the interruption. Next he spoke to the other men in the war talk: “We close our discussion and know: we will not docilely allow ourselves to be killed like our brothers if they attack us on the Sabbath. We will defend ourselves and fight, as long as there is a spark of breath within us! Nothing is more sacred to us than the Sabbath, but if they attack us, we will defend ourselves!”

With that he raised himself up with a quick motion, so that his noble, bearded face glowed like copper in the reflection of the red fire, and turned to Fritz:

“Now, my friend, what prospects do you bring us?”

“I come from Jerusalem. I saw how King Antiochus rode out from the fortress with many thousands of soldiers, horses, and elephants, and is on the way here. ‘Now we advance against Jehuda Maccabee, may he be on his guard!’ is what the king was calling out when I saw him. Soon he will be here!”

“Good. I thank you, my boy!” called Jehuda and ordered his people to assemble: “We will move out of the cave and assemble ourselves for battle! They will not massacre us like mice in a hole!”

From all depths of the cave came the dark, roaring call of the horns, which rang gauntly in echoes. As they climbed out of the gloominess of the cave and man after man came out into the open, their eyes were met with an unsettling sight. Below in the valley stood the entire enormous army of Antiochus Epiphanes, and the sun harshly reflected itself in their innumerable shields, spears, and swords, so that the entire landscape seemed to burn.

“Stay at my side, my boy!” called Jehuda Maccabee, and Fritz followed him proudly and with admiration from all as they threw themselves in the fight against Antiochus. It was a gruesome commotion; the horns sounded dull, the fanfares bright. Cries flew through the air; spears, shields, and swords pounded with assailing noises at each other, and suddenly Fritz spotted the elephant of the king. He saw him briefly behind Jehuda, who was defending against the enemies with great courage, tore the

sword from the twitching hand of one of the Syrians who Jehuda had mowed down, and brought it with him into an alley in the middle of the enemy.

Good thing that I am still small, he thought, while he used the heavy sword with both hands. Because he was so small, he could unexpectedly muddle through the legs of horses and the enormous enemies, until he was under the elephants. With the utmost effort he lifted it high and plunged the sword into the body from underneath the mighty animal. A shakiness came through the colossus, and before Fritz could rescue himself, the elephant crashed and squashed him....

“Don’t you want to stand up, Fritz?” called someone.

“Oh, I’m not squashed?” asked Fritz and opened his eyes. It was not Jehuda who called to him, rather Walter Ruben, but Fritz was still too confused. He rubbed the sleep and the Maccabee dream out of his eyes and hurried, because the cheeky Simon was already half dressed.

Chapter Eight: At the House is a Thick Wall

And again everything was totally different, if you had just been introduced to this household. At home, waking up was a nuisance, a requirement; out here it was a pleasure. As he jumped out of bed, Simon trilled a song; Jakob and Walter buzzed and hummed the refrain along with him. Next door in the girls’ room you heard Ruth sing in falsetto. And at the snowy window ledge seven sparrows chirped in time with one another. “Who will be ready first?” Jakob called without stuttering and smiled at this with bright joy, and at the same time they all hurried very much; they cleaned themselves one after another, and some minutes later they were all ready at the same time. How this amazed them, as they

came down and the father, who wore a broad gray apron as a sackcloth, went with them to see a great trough in the stable.

“I think today is the Sabbath,” Fritz dared in his own heart to ask, “so you may not do any work?”

“It is nice that you are careful of that,” answered the father later, as he untied his wide apron, “we may do no work on Sunday and never, not even for our cattle, be made to do work. But to make the food for the animals last, we have already put that right yesterday; it is not work, rather our duty. And if you knew a better way for us to say this, then you knew too, that our animals, exactly like us, receive better food during the week. First,” reasoned Herr Ruben, smiling, “On Friday Ruth offered our calf fish and meat, but the calf thinks it is vegetarian, and so it sticks with hay and clover.”

“Now we want to leave the animals alone,” urged mother, who always stood with the children on the level of the house floor, where it was rather cold—“they should have breakfast, because they have it with a morning prayer for their animal ways to serve for a long time. We want to get to prayers quickly now, and with that we can have breakfast afterwards.”

Herr Ruben had in the meantime washed his hands once, put on the coat and the good hat and went with the children to the synagogue, while the mother should meet up with the girls. Only Ruth should stay with little Joseph at the house.

As they again went through the woods and then over the wide village streets to the school, Fritz asked: “Do the animals pray too then?”

“Of course,” explained Herr Ruben, “every creature prays and thanks God for his ways, even if we also don’t understand them. In some weeks, for example, when winter

passes over us and the first sap climbs again in the plants, the trees celebrate their New Years. You don't need to be embarrassed by your questions, Fritz, because like you, sometimes an adult person will ask why they have trees in the New Years festival; they aren't really living things. Then you send the person who believes this into the forest, and he sees the trees more precisely. He notices there that the trees are alive, as if the roots had feet and stood with them deep in the ground, instead of walking around from here to there. Yes, the man said, when he came to the forest, he lived and he prayed in choir like us. They whispered and roared their prayers with fine, deep voices, they move back and forth with their prayers and bowed before God. Yes, they have a prayer leader, and in the choir with him they pray in the great beautiful temple that we call the forest, and thank God for life and health, for rain and wind, for sunlight and growing up and for the long quiet winter nights, in which we can sleep under the thick down sheet of snow, without being cold.

In the little synagogue, the divine service was detailed and for Fritz also a little stranger than the evening before. The men each had a wide, black-striped tallit on, even Walter had one too, and Herr Ruben gave Fritz a prayer book in his hand, wherein next to the Hebrew prayers, which he could not follow, there stood a translation, from which he got all kinds of terms. And by the solemn songs and by the procession of the mysterious and colorfully-decorated protective hangings was the sacred chest raised up, the chest with that dressed and excavated Torah roll, unrolled on the reading device, and as a man was called to do a reading after another, no more eyes turned to Fritz. If I know even so little, he thought, at the least I also could be called upon to read the Torah so solemnly! Or if I knew so much, that I got to be the reader of the row and move the fine silver hand!

I just want to learn, learn, learn, he decided. Finally the Torah was heaved up, rolled back together, covered, and dressed with its silver decorations and solemnly put back into the sacred chest. The prayer was spoken, first quietly by the community, then repeated loudly with song by the prayer leader; then came the closing prayers, and with festive and happy moods they went home. At the gate door the little Joseph ran towards them and joyfully cried: Happy Sabbath!

The cup with red wine stood on the table that was already dressed for breakfast; at the father's place there lay again two loaves of crispy, gleaming Challah under the beautiful, silver-embroidered velvet mat, and once again Herr Ruben recited Kiddush. For Fritz and Rosel it was no longer so strange, but rather quite cozy, and as they all washed their hands and spoke the blessing—Fritz and Rosel had not yet totally forgotten the words—there, and they ate with so much fervor and appetite that a glutton would be jealous. (And what would their mother say back in the city, where Rosel was always “not hungry anymore” and Fritz mostly grumbled!) A song was sung, and then came the table prayer, and then they stood up-----

The day passed by like in flight, gloomy clouds already moved through the sky, and in the nice sitting room it slowly became dark. The oven had cooled, several frost patterns grew on the window, and the family sat quietly and well-behaved by each other. By Herr Ruben, Rosel indulged herself with a smile that made her almost wistful for her dimples, and asked finally, why they could no longer be lively as they had before. After a while Herr Ruben answered her:

“It is a little bit gray outside, and the Sabbath is coming to an end. The gray and the pending darkness weigh heavily on the heart. How shall I explain this, my child?

Look, the Sabbath is sacred to us, and in some ways it is does not seem like a day, but rather a beloved and adored king. You speak of the Sabbath King, and on Friday evening our prayer is as if we go to meet the Sabbath King, who comes to visit us and who we want to receive joyfully and worthily, with songs and prayers. Then the king is with us, and we are happy; and like we are with a king, we feast with honor the entire week, royally and richly; we dress nicely, are proud and happy and prideful, and do no work at all in order to give our guest the best possible visit. And as long as the king is with us, nothing happens that is low, nothing ugly, nothing from the weekday or the everyday. A thick wall is built around our house, and nothing that isn't worthy of a king can get through, and even if we can't see the wall and reach out with our hands, it is still there. Now it is evening, and the wall is beginning to disintegrate, and the Sabbath king prepares to leave us. Then the week begins again with its worries and trivialities, and we are poor devils once again, who must be mistreated, and drudge through as if they have never even seen a king before. But as long as he is with us, we cannot be sad; rather, the wistfulness steals upon us, swallows us up and treats us as though we are befitting the presence of a king.

They tried to be bright as it became ever darker. As it was also cold outside and the snow on the windowpane seemed like it might be nearly gone, they went to the Sabbath-end-prayer; the bright and cheerful melodies of the Ledavid baruch Psalms rolled out, and in a lively tone the evening prayers followed, then the Havdalah, and as they went home, everyone called to each other "Good week".

At home too there was great unease now, and the "Good week!" rang bright and cheerful from all throats; the living room was light and comfortably warm; on the table

stood a glass of liquor, the tin of besamim⁷, and a braided, colorful candle for Havdalah; Ruth explained to Rosel, whose eyes never before had been so wide open, Havdalah is the blessing dividing the Sabbath and weekdays. But she did not have much time for her whispered explanation, as little Joseph strode readily into the kitchen and carried a box of matches for his father in his raised right hand; the mother came in after him, so that everyone was collected together in the sitting room. The father lit the colorful, at first slightly crackling candle and gave it to Fritz to hold in his hand, which didn't feel bad at all, and in his own hand was the glass, in the other the silver tin with the silver weather vane above, and spoke loudly the recitation and the blessing over the drink. Then he placed the glass on the table, opened the tin and spoke the blessing over the spices that were within it, cloves, cinnamon, and other lovely aromatic things, elevated the tin and refreshed himself with its fragrance, and everyone formed a line to smell the tin. When everyone had smelled it, he moved both hands near the light and viewed it therein, while he said the blessing over the flame. Then he took the candle from Fritz's hand and the glass again in the other hand, spoke the closing blessing, sat, drank of the liquor, and splashed a few drops, at which the crackling light went out, and then Walter, Simon, Fritz, and Jakob drank the sharp liquor.

Spontaneously, Rosel grabbed at the glass, but the mother laid a finger on her mouth and said: "Women and girls do not drink of the Havdalah."

"Why not?" asked Fritz; he had to swallow a few times first, because the liquor was rather strong.

⁷ "Besamim" is the term for spices used at the Havdalah ceremony. Whole cloves are commonly used.

“Because they would become boozers and grow beards and beer bellies like a man,” Hannchen called out, and everyone laughed.

But if the Sabbath was now over, then had the workday not yet begun. Now they sang first the songs of the prophet Elia, the forerunner of the Messiah, who would redeem us all, and each song was more beautiful than the last.

Then Ruth brought the menorah, and the father lit all eight candles, and they all sang Hanukkah songs joyfully together. It was no longer the Sabbath, but Hanukkah, and also a festival, and all possible games for the long evening were prepared by the children, and in every corner they played chess, lady, lottery, and above all else, dreidel.

Chapter Nine: The Telegram

Herr Ruben left the living room to move around and look after the animals; Frau Ruben was in the kitchen to tend to the evening bread, and the children were in their rooms to continue playing. Dreamy and still a little stunned from the many different experiences of the day, Rosel and Fritz stood at the window and peered at the menorah with the eight small yellow lights and the Shamash in front of it, which beamed so golden in the night, and peered at the frost patterns on the windowpane and the unique silver shimmer they each gave off. Then Fritz recalled how Herr Ruben had gone outside into the hall, and asked:

“Didn’t a telegram come yesterday?”

“You know it,” answered the mother from the kitchen, “is it not on the little table in the hall?”

Now Fritz had already sworn to never again in his life be curious, but now he could no longer help it, and went straight from the room into the hall. What was in the telegram? But first the father went into the kitchen and lit a small cigar. Fritz went in after him as though he was looking for something.

“Would you also like a cigar?” the mother asked, laughing.

“Oh no, I—” he did not come in again. He became quite red and ran back out. In the hall he stood uncertainly at the door.

The father came back out, went to the low table, took the telegram out of its envelope, which he opened with two fingers, read it, and turned pale. Then he read it one more time and shook his head. He then placed the telegram in his pocket and looked very irritated, until his gaze fell to Fritz, who was at best still quite small and who he had made quite uncertain. But Herr Ruben did not seem to notice him, although he looked right at him. It nearly hurt Fritz’s feelings. Yet he really wanted to ask what was in the telegram, but he thought back to his experience in the night; the blood left his face, and he no longer wanted those words on his lips.

Now Herr Ruben took the telegram out of his pocket and read it again. It was, like many telegrams, scarcely two lines long, and Herr Ruben was not inexperienced in reading. But now he was distinctly pale and said no words and remained standing in the same spot—something must not be right. And now Fritz brought it up no more, and easily pushed down the latch of the sitting room door, which he held in his hand, and went away again, because he feared Herr Ruben might cry, and he definitely didn’t want that. But what should he do? From the kitchen he heard the fire in the hearth crackle and snap, and the fat sizzling in the pan, and the mother loudly fumbling with pots and pans.

He had thought of everything possible, and now he just had to not stand here in the hall, and all of a sudden he was struck with the fear that there could be something terrible in the telegram. Why else would Herr Ruben make such a face, he thought. It made him unsettlingly sorry, that Herr Ruben should be sorrowful. He and his entire family had so totally won Fritz's heart over in the past few days, that he wanted to give them every benefit and every wish that their eyes had ever seen, and now there was this mysterious telegram, and Herr Ruben stood there like stone. What a shame! But then Fritz thought that the telegram had been there since Friday afternoon. If it contained bad news, good thing that they only opened it now! And when Fritz himself had nearly opened the telegram the previous night, what misfortune that would have brought! Perhaps the whole family would have spent the whole day as if they were made from stone, like Herr Ruben now. No, it was good that the prankster Simon had placed an icicle in his hand instead of the telegram! Otherwise—

Now Herr Ruben moved again. He gave a fine, and it seemed to Fritz a pained laugh; folded the telegram together; placed it once more in his pocket; and went into his bedroom. Now he will hide it from the others, Fritz said to himself, because it will at least spare their worries. What havoc I could have wreaked!

"Fritz," the father called suddenly, interrupting the boy's thoughts, "when should we take you back to your house?"

"Mama said she will expect us tonight, but I don't know yet when the train comes," answered Fritz diligently, and it made his heart yet heavier, because he remembered that she must already be there.

“Go, my boy,” the father called again from his bedroom, “Go upstairs, grab Simon, and run with him quickly through the woods into the village to the post office. Ask about the trains and write it down. I’ll go with you into the city.”

While Fritz obediently carried out his orders with Simon, Rosel was alone in the room with the menorah. It was very quiet in the room; no windows and no doors were open, and the flames of the candles wouldn’t stay still, but moved with an almost inaudible sound here and there, as if they were tiny fireplaces that whispered this and that in each other’s ears. If they really whispered too much, so that even a frost pattern on the windowpane let her tiny little head with the silver-white ringlets hang, and her soft little arms with the pinhead-sized details, but longish flames lifted up, that whistled with each other and caused the Shamash in the menorah to say angrily:

“What do you have to say?”

Be quiet, you whispering souls!”

But the first light answered him:

“What does he have to complain about,

When we have something to say?”

And the second light complied:

“This Shamash, our server,

Works as though he were already a rabbi!

He only has to light us,

And say nothing else!”

At this the Shamash backed down, as you might care to say:

“Little lights, all united,

Forgive me, it was not meant angrily!”

And now the other little light started again with its first speech:

“How quickly that ceremony passes.

Eight lights alone, and then forgetting.”

“No, no child forgets so soon

Our lights, which are a sign

Of the quarter of oil in a tiny jar

That was enough for eight days!”

“And I shine in golden beauty,

For the mother with her seven sons;

She loved them all intimately,

And sacrificed their lives and hers,

Rather than abandon her life’s beliefs.”

“And my beaming smile tries to convey

That the memory never escapes,

Of Mattitjahu and his heroes!

And I beam golden roses of fire

For the unforgettable anonymous—

they fell, pure and without struggle,

So as to not profane the Sabbath.”

And at long last the Shamash again attempted to have a say, but it already sounded quite different:

“Every light, so right and plain,
Speaks thanks and praise to God,
And so the Shamash will never fail,
Though not weighing much itself,
To light every flame.”⁸

Lost in thought and dreaming, standing at the window, little Rosel could hear no more of the whispered conversations of the candles, because the mother and Ruth came into the sitting room again, in order to set the table, and the frost patterns on the windowpane let their little arms hang down helplessly, while the head was already melting away; only a few small ringlets stuck to the middle of the window; and at this Rosel had to smile, because the frost pattern had to leave so urgently that she completely forgot to take her hairstyle with her. And the boys came crashing about on the steps underneath, and the cow mooed good night, Prince bayed, and the sparrows scolded as naggingly as they had the first time, and little Joseph tripped to the window, clapped his little hands, and called, “Eichen, Eichen!” But Rosel couldn’t see any squirrel, neither in

⁸ Like the squirrel’s question in Fritz’s dream, this exchange that Rosel imagines between the Shamash and the Hanukkah lights rhymes when read in German.

the room nor at the window, and like at first, as the mother called everyone for evening bread, Rosel thought that little Joseph meant that he would like an egg to eat.⁹

In the meantime Fritz and Simon arrived back from the post office and explained that in an hour, Herr Ruben needed to go with them to the train station, and then it would stop.

Finally, when they were all comfortably seated around the table, and with an appetite that for weekdays was none too scant, Herr Ruben asked: “Fritz, can you read well?”

“The best in our entire class!” Fritz replied brightly.

“Rosel, is that true?”

“And how!”

“Now then, Fritz, read us all the telegram that we could not open yesterday.”

Herr Ruben took the telegram out of his pocket, handed it across the table, and Fritz read it aloud:

“HERR ISAAK RUBEN. CONGRATULATIONS! WE HAVE PULLED THE
NUMBER 1234567890 FOR THE JACKPOT! ONE MILLION!
CONGRATULATIONS FROM LOTTERY COLLECTOR ROTSPOHN.”

Frau Ruben fell from her chair in joy, Simon dove headfirst over the table, Walter did a somersault narrowly missing a lamp, Ruth yodeled, Jakob stuttered: “The jack—jack—jack—jack—“, little Joseph cried, “Eichen, Eichen, Eichen!” Hannchen

⁹ Once again, while “Eichen” means “oaks,” we are not sure what little Joseph means. Based off of their journey to the Ruben house, Rosel considers “Eichhörnchen” for squirrel and “Ei” for egg.

cried, Rosel congratulated them uninterruptedly, Esther whistled, and there was such jubilation that a hundredweight of pins could have fallen unnoticed to the floor....

Rosel and Fritz had related the story of the visit to their mother up to this point, and now Fritz asked her: "Mama, what will the Rubens even do with their million?"

"Would we like to guess?"

Works Cited

Hirsch, Leo. *Das Lichterhaus im Walde*. Illus. Ludwig Schwerin. Berlin: Verlag Kedem, 1936. Print.

Hirsch, Leo. *Lampion*. Mähr-Ostrau: Verlag Dr. R. Färber, 1928. Print.

Kaplan, Edward K., and Samuel H. Dresner. *Abraham Joshua Heschel: Prophetic Witness*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1998. Print.

Lowenthal, E. G. "Ein Buch Erinnert: Leo Hirsch's 'Judentumskunde'" ["A Book Remembered: Leo Hirsch's 'Judentumskunde'"]. *Association of Jewish Refugees Information* XXI.12 (1966): 8.

Ury, Else. *Nesthäkchen and the World War*. Trans. Steven Lehrer. Lincoln: IUUniverse, 2006. Print.